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SOURCES OF THE ARTHUR STORY IN CHESTER'S  
*LOVES MARTYR*<sup>1</sup>

Critical study of Robert Chester's *Loves Martyr* has been chiefly concerned thus far with the interpretation of the allegory of the Turtle and Phoenix, and comparatively little has been done toward tracing the sources from which the materials for the poem were borrowed, although one might fairly expect by this means to gain additional information concerning the literary equipment of a poet whose personality, and even identity, are involved in obscurity. The title-page of *Loves Martyr*, it is true, offers to the reader what purports to be an explicit statement of the source of the poem: "*now first translated out of the venerable Italian Torquato Caeliano.*" Unfortunately, however, neither Dr. Grosart nor any subsequent student of Chester's poem has succeeded in identifying the Italian author here mentioned, and it is strongly suspected that the statement on the title-page may be merely a device to start the reader on a false scent. It is quite possible that Chester put forth his poem under the guise of a translation with the deliberate purpose of concealing the personal nature of his allegory of the Phoenix and Turtle.

There is a large section of *Loves Martyr*—nearly one-third of the poem—which, fortunately, is not haunted by the ghost of Torquato Caeliano: this is the *Birth, Life and Death of honourable Arthur, King of Brittain*. This digression concerning King Arthur, as Professor Carleton Brown has recently pointed out,<sup>2</sup> formed no part of the original plan of *Loves Martyr*, but was inserted by Chester as an afterthought with a separate preface, in which he explained to the reader the reason for its introduction. The purpose of the present paper is to examine the sources of this Arthurian material with a view to gaining new information concerning Chester's literary methods and the authorities with which he was acquainted.

In his preface to the history of Arthur and in scattered remarks in the poem itself Chester gives the reader to understand that his

<sup>1</sup> Edited by Alexander B. Grosart, New Shakspeare Society, Series viii, No. 2 London, 1878.

<sup>2</sup> In *Poems by Sir John Salusbury and Robert Chester*. Bryn Mawr, 1913, liv f.

information on this subject has been drawn from the chronicle histories. "I thought good to write not according to ages oblivion, but directed onely by our late Historiographers of England, who no doubt have taken great pains in the searching forth of the truth of that first Christian worthie." Elsewhere Chester appeals again to the authority of "Wise, learned Historiographers," or to the "true Historiographer." It is, therefore, a matter of some surprise to find that a considerable portion of Chester's story of Arthur has been borrowed not from history but from romance, being copied almost literally from the first chapters of Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Indeed, the preface itself, in which Chester discusses the evidence for the historical existence of Arthur, contains more than one passage which has been borrowed directly from Caxton's preface to the *Morte D'Arthur*, as will be seen from the following parallels:

Caxton:<sup>3</sup> p. 2.

Fyrst in the abbey of Westmestre at Saynt Edwardes shryne remayneth the prynte of his seal in reed Waxe closed in beryll/ In whych is wryton Patricius Arthurus/ Britannie/ Gallie/ Germanie/ dacie/ Imperator/ Item in the castel of douver ye may see Gauwayns skulle/ & Cradock's mantle. At wynchester the rounde table/ in other places Launcelottes swerde and many other thynges.

Loves Martyr: p. 35.

And for more confirmation of the truth, looke but in the Abbey of Westminster at Saint Edwards shrine, there shalt thou see the print of his royal Seale in red wax closed in Berrill, with this inscription, Patricius Arthurus Galliae, Germaniae, Daciae Imperator. At Douer likewise you may see Sir Gawins skull and Cradocks mantle: At Winchester, a Citie well knowne in England, his famous round Table, with many other notable monuments too long to rehearse.

A few lines further on both prefaces refer to Arthur's wide-spread fame outside of Britain:

Caxton: p. 2.

And also he is more spoken of beyonde the see moo bookes made of his noble actes than there be in england, as wel in duche, ytalyen, spaynysshe, and grekysshe as in frensshe.

Loves Martyr: p. 35.

. . . . that neuer dead Prince of memory, is more beholding to the French, the Romane, the Scot, the Italian, yea to the Greekes themselves, then to his own Countrymen, who haue fully and wholly set forth his fame and liuelyhood.

Possibly, also, Chester's reference to the "honourable-minded friends" who urged on him the insertion of Arthur's life in his poem

<sup>3</sup> All references to Malory are to Sommer's edition, London, 1889, I.

is an echo of Caxton's "many noble and dyvers gentylmen" who desired him to print an account of Arthur.

Turning to the poem itself we find that after the first stanza, which is purely introductory, Chester proceeds at once to follow Malory:

Malory: Bk. I, Ch. i. p. 35.

It befel in the dayes of Vther  
pendragon when he was kynge of all  
Englond/ and so regned that there was  
a myghty duke in Cornewail that  
helde warre ageynst hym long tyme.

p. 35.

And the duke was called the duke of  
Tyntagil/ and so by meanes kynge  
Vther send for this duk/ charyng  
hym to bryng his wyf with him/

p. 35.

and in lyke wyse as she saide so  
they departed/ that neyther the  
kynge nor none of his counceill were  
ware of their departyng. Also soone  
as kyng Vther knewe of their  
departyng soo sodenly/ he was won-  
derly wrothe.

Loves Martyr: p. 36, st. 2.

In the last of *Vter* surnam'd Pen-  
dragon, . . . .

In famous *Brytaine* mongst his  
owne allies,

There was a mightie Duke that  
gouern'd Cornewaile,

That held long warre, and did this  
King assaile.

p. 36, st. 3.

This Duke was nam'd the Duke of  
*Tintagil*: . . . .

From whence *Pendragon* for this  
Duke did send,

And being wounded sore with  
*Cupids* sting,

Charg'd him his Wife vnto the  
Court to bring.

p. 37, st. 4.

And as the Duchess spake, the  
Duke departed,

That neither *Vter* nor his Councill  
knew, . . . .

Soone as the King perceiued their  
intent,

Intemperate Rage made him impa-  
tient.

The three stanzas describing Uther's melancholy at the loss of Igrene are Chester's own, but except for such poetic elaborations the similarity between the two accounts is unmistakable. Aside from these close verbal resemblances the influence of Malory appears in Chester's use of certain details peculiar to the *Morte D'Arthur*. The first example of this occurs in the account of Merlin's coming to the assistance of Uther in winning Igrene. In other versions Uther is advised to send for Merlin, who comes at his command. In Malory Sir Ulfius, setting out to find Merlin, meets

an old beggar,<sup>4</sup> who asks him his quest. When Ulfius disdains to answer this beggar's question, the supposed beggar reveals himself: "I knowe whome thou sekest/ for thou sekest Merlyn/ therefore seke no ferther/ for I am he/"<sup>5</sup> and he promises to aid the king. Ulfius immediately returns to Uther with the good news, and to the King's questioning where Merlin is, he answers, "sir he wille not dwelle long/ ther with al Vlfius was ware where Merlyn stood at the porche of the paelions dore/"<sup>6</sup> In Chester the account is very similar. Among the others versions of this incident the closest approach to Chester's is that in the prose *Merlin*.<sup>7</sup> Here Ulfín meets "with a man that he nothing kenned," and the stranger, learning his errand, tells him to come again next day and name the reward the king will give for Merlin's aid. On the following day, Ulfín returns with the king, and in the same place meets a cripple whom the king recognizes as Merlin.

A second detail that is found only in Malory and Chester relates to the transformation of Uther, Ulfias, and Merlin into the likenesses of Duke Gorlois and two of his followers; a transformation by which the three are to gain access to the castle wherein Igrene is guarded. Malory's version is the only one, previous to Chester's, in which Ulfias and Merlin represent respectively Brastias and Jordanus. Chester adopts the same transformation.

The close verbal correspondence between the two authors continues through the account of Arthur's birth and of his subsequent delivery to Sir Hector:

Malory: 39.

So the child was delyuerd vnto  
Merlyn/ and so he bare it forth vnto  
Syre Ector/ and made an holy man to  
crysten hym/ and named hym Ar-  
thur/

Loves Martyr: 46, st. 5.

So *Merlin* had the prince at his  
disposing,  
Committing it to *Hectors* faithfull  
wife: . . . .  
A holy reuerent Man indu'de  
with fame,  
*Arthur* of *Britaine* cald the  
Princes name.

From this point Malory ceases to supply a source for Chester's narrative. Whereas Malory relates the story of Uther's last battle, of his death, and of the well-known sword-test by which Arthur is recognized as his rightful successor, Chester, on the contrary,

<sup>4</sup> In the English prose *Merlin*, E. E. T. S. orig. ser. 10, II. 42, Merlin appears as a beggar but not in connection with the Igrene story.

<sup>5</sup> Malory, 36.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Edited by H. B. Wheatley, E. E. T. S. orig. ser. 10, p. 72.

records Uther's death briefly, and proceeds at once to the reign of Arthur. His information now comes from the "Historiographers," chiefly from Holinshed from whom he borrows as literally as up to this point he had done from Malory. The transition is made somewhat abruptly immediately after the verses last quoted. The succeeding stanzas in Chester and their source in Holinshed are in part as follows:

Holin:<sup>a</sup> 88, b.

Finallie (according to the agreement of the English writers) Uter Pendragon died by poison, when he had gouerned this land by the full terme of 16 years, and was after buried by his brother Aurelius at *Stoneheng*, otherwise called *Chorea Gigantum*, leauing his sonne Arthur to succeed him.

Loves Martyr: 47, st. 1 f.

The sixteenth yeare of his victorious raigne,

By poison was this braue *Pendragon* slaine.

His body vnto *Stone-heng* being brought,

Hard by his brother *Aurelius* is he laid, . . . .

But from his loynes he left a sonne behind,

The right *Idea* of his fathers mind.

In both substance and wording there is little to choose between this passage in Holinshed and the account of the same event in Fabyan's Chronicle. But inasmuch as Chester undoubtedly uses Holinshed later on, the latter rather than Fabyan is probably the source for the present passage. Chester's account of the twelve battles of Arthur is clearly derived from Holinshed:

Holin: 90, a.

He fought (as the common report goeth of him) 12 notable battels against the Saxons, and in euerie of them went away with the victorie, but yet he could not driue them quite out of the land, but that they kept still the countries which they had in possession, as Kent, Sutherie, Norfolke, and others: howbeit some writers testifie, that they held these countries as tributaries to Arthur.

Loves Martyr: 47, st. 4 ff.

Twelue noble battels did King *Arthur* fight,

Against the *Saxons* men of hardie strength,

And in the battels put them still to flight,

Bringing them in subjection at the length:

He neuer stroue to driue them quite away,

But stragling here and there he let them stay.

In *Southry*, *Kent*, and *Norfolke* did they dwell,

Still owing homage to king *Arthures* greatnesse . . . .

<sup>a</sup> *The Historie of England*, edition, 1586 or 7.

Chester follows Holinshed up to the point of the coronation of Arthur. For his description of this event he makes use of a new source, which will be discussed in a later paragraph. He returns to Holinshed in the latter part of the poem, where he recounts Arthur's expedition against the Romans and his fight with certain "huge Mirmedons . . . surnamed Giants," giving his account in much more expanded form than the corresponding report in Holinshed.<sup>9</sup> However, the similarity between the two versions is shown in the following points of comparison. Like Holinshed, Chester omits the name of Flolo, against whom Arthur's first continental attack was made; he does not report the death of the Roman Lucius; his "Mirmedons" are paralleled by Holinshed's giants "of passing force and hugeness of stature"; and finally he, too, states that Arthur's intention was to crown himself emperor at Rome, a plan brought to nought by Modred's treason. The latter's defeat is told in words borrowed from the chronicle:

Holin: 91, b.

Mordred fled from this battell, and  
getting ships sailed westward, and  
finallie landed in Cornwall.

Loves Martyr: 70, st. 3.

That vniust *Mordred* . . . .  
Fled from the battell, getting ships  
he saild  
Westward towards *Cornwail* whē/  
his force was quail'd.

It may be noted that Chester occasionally patches together two passages that are not consecutive in his source, as in the following stanza:

Holin: 91, b, l.52.

. . . . which was in the last yeere  
of the reigne of the same Henrie, more  
than six hundred yeeres after the  
buriall thereof.

Loves Martyr: 72, st. 2.

In the last yeare of *Henries* royaltie,  
More then sixe hundred after his  
buriall,  
By the Abbot of the house of  
Glastenburie,  
At last they found King Arthurs  
funerall:  
*Henry de Bloys* the Abbots name  
they gaue,  
Who by the Kings commaund did  
find the graue.

92, a, l.22.

The abbat, which then was gouernour  
of the house, was named Stephan,  
or Henrie de Blois, otherwise de  
Sullie, nephue to king Henrie the  
second (by whose commandement he  
had serched for the graue of Arthur)

. . . . .

After speaking of the translation of Arthur's bones to a mausoleum within Glastonbury Abbey, Chester quotes the epitaph that

<sup>9</sup> Holin: 91, a. Chester: 64, st. 3 ff.

was inscribed on the king's tomb, a detail not found in Holinshed but probably taken from John Leland, who notes, "Hoc autem epitaphium tumbae inscribitur:

Hic jacet Arthurus, flos regum, gloria regni,  
Quem mores, probitas commendant laude perenni."<sup>10</sup>

This is not the only trace of Leland's influence. The Latin encomium which Chester appends to his story of Arthur is definitely named as Leland's. Holinshed quotes the same verses, so that it is probable that Chester knew of them from Holinshed and from Leland. Similarly, Leland seems to be responsible, either at first hand or through Holinshed, for Chester's statement that Uther was surnamed Pendragon, "for his wittie pollicies," a detail which does not appear in Malory, Chester's main source in this portion of the story. The new interpretation of "Pendragon" apparently arises from the following phrase of Leland's in the *Assertio Arturii*:<sup>11</sup> "Utherius, rex Britannorum, cognomine Pendraco, a serpentina, ut ego arbitror, prudentia sic dictus." Holinshed<sup>12</sup> first repeats the usual explanation of the name, the one given by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and then adds, "But others supposed he was so called of his wisdom and serpentine subtiltie, or for that he gaue the dragons head in his banner."

What appears to be a clear case of the direct use of Leland is a marginal reference which Chester makes to a certain "Valerius" as authority for Arthur's conquests. Leland quotes the same Valerius, who, otherwise, remains unidentified. The two passages are as follows:

Leland: Collect. V, 23.

Tantum in praesentia adjiciam,  
Valerium quendam triginta regnorum  
ab Arturio devictorum meminisse.  
Nam eo seculo ingens regulorum turba  
insulas una cum Gallia & Germania  
sub ditone tenebant.

Loves Martyr: 47.

Valerius vvitnesseth that K. Arthur  
cōquered thirty kingdomes, for as thē  
a great cōpany of Gouvernors held  
vnder their iurisdiction the Iland  
together vvith France and Germanie.

<sup>10</sup> *Collectanea*, V, 51.

<sup>11</sup> *Collectanea*, V, 18.

<sup>12</sup> P. 87, b. Grafton in his chronicle of 1569, I, 82, has a similar remark: "This man [Uter] was surnamed Pendragon. The cause thereof, as sayth the English Chronicle, was for that Merlyn lykened him vnto a Dragon vnder a starre apering in the firmament: Whereof there is made long processe in the story of Gaufride, but Layland a man in his tyme very skilfull in the antiquities of this Realme, thinketh this name was geuen him for his great prudence and wisdom wherein Serpents do excell."

These points of correspondence make it evident that Chester knew Leland's as well as Holinshed's writings.<sup>13</sup>

When Chester came to the account of Arthur's coronation, as has already been stated, he abandoned Holinshed as his source. The break in his narrative at this point is emphasized by the insertion of the following heading: "The Coronation of King Arthur, and the Solemnitie thereof: the proud message of the Romanes, and the whole resolution of King Arthur and his Nobles." For this material Chester turned back to early records of Arthur, most probably to Geoffrey of Monmouth, though Chester's account shows some variation. The following parallels are noteworthy:

Geof: bk. IX, ch. xiii, p. 133.<sup>14</sup>

Dubricius ergo, quoniam in sua dioecesi curia tenebatur, paratus ad celebrandum obsequium, hujus rei curam suscepit.

p. 133.

Rege tandem insignito, ad templum Metropolitanæ sedis ornatè conducitur: dextro enim et a laevo latere duo Archipontifices ipsum tenebant. Quatuor autem reges, Albanie videlicet atque Cornubie, Demetie et Venedocie, quorum illud jus fuerat, quatuor aureos gladios ante ipsum ferentes, præibant.

Loves Martyr: 49, st. 3.

*Dubright* (because the Court at that time lay

Within the compasse of his Dio-cesse)

In his own person on this Royall day,

Richly to furnish him he did addresse,

His loue vnto his King he did expresse,

And at his hands the King was dignified . . . . .

p. 50, st. 1 ff.

This happie Coronation being ended,

The King was brought in sumptuous royaltie . . . .

To the Cathedrall church of that same See,

Being the *Metropolitall* in nobilitie, . . . . .

On either hand did two Archbishops ride,

<sup>13</sup> It may be added here that Chester's account of the cities of Britain and their founders, which precedes his story of Arthur, is also taken from Holinshed. Chester does not give the kings in chronological order. He begins with Alfred, whom he calls "King of Northumbers," and then goes back to "Leyre," continually putting sons before fathers. Chester's statement that Windsor was first built by Arviragus and finally finished by Arthur is not taken from Holinshed. Arthur is sometimes spoken of as the founder of that city; cf. Grafton I, 83.

<sup>14</sup> San-Marte's edition, Halle, 1854.

Supporting *Arthur of Britania*,  
And foure Kings before him did  
abide,  
*Angisell* King of stout *Albania*,  
And *Cadual* King of *Venedocia*,  
*Cador* of *Cornewaile* mongst these  
Princes past,  
And *Sater* of *Demetia* was the  
last.

These foure attired in rich orna-  
ments,  
Foure golden Swords before the  
King did beare, . . . . .

In Chester's account of the coronation the following points of variation from Geoffrey are to be noted: (1) the omission of any reference to the games and feasting which Geoffrey describes; (2) according to Chester four Roman ambassadors came to Arthur, whereas in Geoffrey their number is twelve; (3) the place of the coronation is designated by the Welsh name *Caerleon* as well as by the Latin *Urbs Legionum*; (4) the four kings who attended Arthur are mentioned by name as well as by title, though Chester could have taken these names from an earlier passage where Geoffrey records a list of nobles at Arthur's feast. In agreement with Geoffrey, on the other hand, Chester gives in full the letter from Lucius Tiberius and the orations of Arthur and his chiefs in reply, and allowing for the demands of verse form and rhetoric, his words closely parallel those of Geoffrey. These various resemblances warrant the conclusion that Chester used Geoffrey for this portion of his poem.

Besides Holinshed, Leland, and Geoffrey, Chester had other so-called historical sources of information concerning Arthur, for he incorporates in his account material not found in these works. Such, for instance, is the "true Pedigree of that famous VVorthie King Arthur, collected out of many learned Authors."

This follows closely a genealogy given in John of Glastonbury. The corresponding passages are as follows:—

<sup>15</sup> Hearne's edition, Oxford, 1726. The genealogy is also quoted by Skeat, *Joseph of Arimathie*, E. E. T. S. orig. ser. 44, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> These four verses are not prefixed to the genealogy in John of Glastonbury but occur in an earlier passage.

Glastonbury: I, 53.<sup>16</sup>

Intrat aualloniam duodena caterua  
virorum,

Flos armathie ioseph est primus  
eorum:

Iosephes ex ioseph genitus patrem  
comitatur;

Hiis aliisque decem ius glastonie  
propriatur.<sup>16</sup>

p. 56.

Haec scriptura testatur, quod rex  
Arthurus de stirpe Ioseph descendit.

Helaius, nepos Ioseph, genuit Iosue,  
Iosue genuit Aminadab, Aminadab  
genuit Castellors, Castellors genuit  
Manael, Manael genuit Lambord &  
Urlard, Lambord genuit filium qui  
genuit ygernam, de qua rex Uterpen-  
dragun genuit nobilem & famosum  
regem Arthorum; per quod patet,  
quod rex Arthurus de stirpe Ioseph  
descendit.

Loves Martyr: 76.

Twelue men in number entred the  
vale of *Aualon*:

*Ioseph* of *Arimathea* was the chieftest  
we confesse,

*Iosue* the sonne of *Ioseph* his father  
did attend on,

With other ten, these *Glaston* did  
possesse,

*Hilarius* the Nephew of *Ioseph* first  
begate

*Iosue* the Wise: *Iosue Aminadab*,  
*Aminadab Castellors* had by fate:  
*Castellors* got *Manael* that louely

Lad,

And *Manael* by his wife had faire-  
fac'd *Lambard*,

With another deare sonne surnamed  
*Vrlard*;

And *Lambard* at the length begot a  
sonne,

That had *Igrene* borne of his wife,  
Of this *Igrene*, Vter the great *Pen-  
dragon*

Begot King *Arthur* famous in his  
life,

Where by the truth this Pedigree  
doth end,

*Arthur* from *Iosephs* loynes did first  
descend.

Both writers give a second genealogy which, starting with Peter, cousin of Joseph of Arimathea, comes down to the four sons of King Lot. The only differences in Chester's list are that the name of Arguth is omitted and the names of Lot's sons are spelled differently. A similar pedigree appears to have been added at the end of Robert of Avesbury's chronicle.<sup>17</sup> Either one of these chronicles may have served as Chester's source.

A section of Chester's poem for which it is more difficult to find a definite source is the description of Arthur's arms. Though the chronicles and romances contain numerous references to Arthur's heraldic devices and banners, none of them entirely resembles that given by Chester, who describes the king's ensign as follows:<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Fletcher, *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, 189.

<sup>18</sup> p. 60, st. 5.

Within his spreading Ensigne first he bore,  
 Allotted from his royall familie,  
 Three flying Dragons and three Crownes he wore,  
 Portraid *de Or*, the field of *Azure* die,  
 His fathers Coate, his mothers Countries grace,  
 His honors Badge, his cruell foes deface.

A single dragon was the emblem of Arthur's father, Uther, and according to the prose Merlin, Arthur, too, had a dragon standard of his own, made for him by Merlin.<sup>19</sup> Hardyng describes one of the king's banners in this verse,<sup>20</sup>

The syxte of goulis, a dragon of golde fyne.

The only discrepancy in Chester's account is that he assigns to Arthur three dragons in place of one.

With the line on the three crowns may be compared another verse from Hardyng's chronicle:<sup>20</sup>

The fyfte baner of goulis. iii. crownes of gold.

In addition to these emblems Arthur

tooke to Armes proper to his desire,  
 . . . . .  
 A crosse of Siluer in a field of *Vert*,  
 A gracious *Embleame* to his great desert.

On the first quarter in this field was figured,  
 The image of our *Ladie* with her *Sonne*  
 Held in her armes . . . . .

The cross is frequently mentioned as a device of the British kings. To quote from Hardyng<sup>21</sup> again, King Arvigarus received from Joseph of Arimathea, " . . . . . a shelde of siluer white, A crosse endlong and ouertwhart full perfect"; and Hardyng continues,

These armes were vsed through all Brytain  
 For a cōmon signe, eche māne to knowe his naciō  
 Frome enemies, whiche nowe we call, certain,  
 Sainct Georges armes . . . . .

<sup>19</sup> II, 115.

<sup>20</sup> p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> p. 85.

Similarly the image of the Virgin is associated with Arthur in the earliest records. Nennius<sup>22</sup> mentions it in his report of the eighth of the twelve battles against the Saxons, "where Arthur bore the image of the Holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shoulders." To this Geoffrey<sup>23</sup> adds some slight detail: "Humeris quoque suis clypeum vocabulo Priwen: in quo imago sanctae Mariae dei genitricis impicta, ipsam in memoriam ipsius saepissime revocabat." But by far the closest parallel to Chester's lines is found in John of Glastonbury: "Nam quae prius erant argentea, cum tribus leonibus rubeis, capita ad terga vertenibus, a tempore adventus Brutus usque ad iam dictam mutacionem regis Arthuri ob memoriam crucis cristallinae, sibi per beatam Mariam collatae, fecit esse viridia, cum cruce argentea, et super dextram brachium crucis, ob memoriam praedicti miraculi, collocavit imaginem beatae Mariae semper virginis, filium suum in ulnis tenentis." This is the only description, so far noted, that agrees with Chester's in detail.

The same difficulty in attempting to determine Chester's source is encountered in dealing with other traditional material in this section of the poem. Chester speaks in one place of the cross that was sent to "*Mercuries delight, Julian the Apostata's onely losse.*"

The reference is to the alleged manner of Julian's death, the emperor having been stabbed, according to tradition, by Mercurius, a Christian knight who had suffered martyrdom under him. Several of the chronicles give the story and it is also frequently included among the miracles of the Virgin,<sup>25</sup> but none of these versions can be assigned definitely as the source used by Chester. Again, in describing the arms of France, Chester recalls the tradition that at the time of the conversion of Clovis the French device of the "three Toades" was changed for that of the fleur de lys. This information is likewise common property.<sup>26</sup> That Chester was following some authority in this section of the poem would be a natural inference from what we know of his method in the other sections of the story. His authority, in that case, is responsible for

<sup>22</sup> Gile's edition, London, 1885, p. 408.

<sup>23</sup> Bk. IX, Ch. 4, p. 125.

<sup>24</sup> I, 80.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Higden, *Polychronicon* V, 177. *Flores Historiarum* I, 167. Ward, *Cat. of Romances*, II, 602, 675, 702, etc.

<sup>26</sup> Chester, 59. Cf. Fabyan, 72.

the general jumble of material in these stanzas; or it is possible that Chester himself caused the confusion by trying to condense his information at the expense of clearness.

The investigation of Chester's sources has brought to light several facts in regard to his literary equipment and his method of handling his material. Apparently he had access to abundant information concerning Arthur and he was at some pains to consult more than one authority for the "better gratulation" of his readers. Malory, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Leland, and Holinshed, were his chief sources; Caxton furnished part of the preface; John of Glastonbury supplied some details; and in addition to what these works contributed, traditional material and classical allusions from perhaps no definite source occur throughout the poem. This list indicates fairly wide and varied reading on the part of Chester.

Chester's literary methods are not difficult to detect. The investigation has shown that he appropriates the language as well as the subject-matter of his sources, writing, no doubt, with the books open before him. His Arthur story, consequently, is not an amalgamation of the materials he has gathered, but a piecing-together of selected passages. Although Chester fills out his borrowings with descriptive matter of his own, he does not succeed in covering over entirely the points of connection between one selection and another, a fact which, if somewhat detrimental to the unity of the poem, has the advantage at the present day of rendering much simpler the attempt to trace each section back to its original.

But little personal information about Chester can be gleaned from the Arthur poem. The inconsistency between his statements and the facts of the case in his use of Malory, for instance, and in the matter of Torquato Caeliano, have already been noted. But such characteristics as these that may be detected in his work throw no light on the question of who Chester was. On this latter point, however, one suggestion may be offered. Chester's zeal in defending Arthur's claims to honor against those who "thought no such mā euer to be liuing," is perhaps inspired by pride in the hero of his own country. Dr. Brown, in the monograph already referred to, has pointed out Chester's connection with Denbighshire.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, a phrase in Chester's preface to the Arthur story has rather a personal tone. Chester has just stated that Arthur owes

<sup>27</sup> p. L f.

remembrance of his deeds rather to foreigners than "to his own Countrymen," and then adds, "how shamelesse is it for some of vs to let slip the truth of this Monarch." This phrase may be a mere echo of Caxton, but it is not impossible that Chester's strong interest in Arthur and his championship of the king's fame were not borrowed sentiments, but sprang from the author's own connection with Wales.

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